



SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER COX

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Broad Support for Homeland Security Committee

A wide range of think-tanks, scholars, and government officials have expressed their full support for a permanent standing Committee on Homeland Security:

The White House:

“The 9/11 Commission recommended that ‘Congress should create a single, principal point of oversight and review for homeland security.’ Accordingly, the 9/11 Commission specifically noted that, of all their recommendations, reorganizing congressional oversight may be among the most important.’ The Administration strongly urges the Conferees to address this critical omission.”

White House letter to the House-Senate Conference on the intelligence reform legislation (H.R. 10/ S. 2845), October 18, 2004

Speaker Dennis Hastert:

“In the last Congress, we created a Select Committee on Homeland Security to help us coordinate our legislative response to the new Department of Homeland Security. This year, it is my intention that we make that Committee permanent.”

Statement to the House Republican Conference after being nominated to serve as Speaker for the fourth consecutive time, November 16, 2004.

The 9/11 Commission:

“[O]n certain issues, other priorities pointed Congress in a direction that was unhelpful in meeting the threats that were emerging in the months leading up to 9/11. Committees with oversight responsibility for aviation focused overwhelmingly on airport congestion and the economic health of the airlines, not aviation security. Committees with responsibility for the INS focused on the Southwest border, not on terrorists. ...

Even in congressional committees responsible for national security, “[t]errorism was a second- or third-order priority.”

9/11 Commission Report at pp.106-07.

The Heritage Foundation:

"[V]igorous support from Congress is needed to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) got the right direction, authorities, and support Unfortunately, from the onset the Homeland Security Committee had only limited authority to serve as an effective watchdog. Dozens of other committees retained their authorities to manage the Department's affairs. ... The Cox report [to the Committee on Rules] should call for: Establishing a permanent Homeland Security Committee with broad oversight of the Department, including sole responsibility for a DHS authorization bill."

Heritage Foundation Web Memo #579, James J. Carafano, "Lack of Congressional Reform Leaves America Less Safe" (September 30, 2004).

Former Speaker Newt Gingrich:

"88 committees and subcommittees for one department? By one count, 412 members of the House serve on a committee or a subcommittee with some right to jurisdiction, and 100 of the senators. Not a single senator is left without an opportunity to ask Secretary Ridge what he's doing ... Now, that's just an absurdity, and it's a violation of our survival requirements."

* * *

"My suggestion is first that you have to have a single standing committee. ... And, so, I think at the earliest date this Congress, this House has to make clear there will be a standing committee, it will have real authority."

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, September 9, 2003.

Former Speaker Tom Foley:

"[T]here's not only a need to bring some focus and scope to the oversight function, but there is a critical need to avoid the distraction of members of this new Department from having to respond day-by-day to dozens and dozens of different requests for testimony."

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, September 9, 2003.

Admiral James Lloyd, Deputy Secretary, Department of Homeland Security:

"What is it about this new department? It's an astonishing undertaking, by far the most complex reorganization at the federal level since the National Security Act of 1947. Unlike 1947, when three, if not four years had gone into the developmental end of the National Security Act -- producing not only the executive branch reorganization, but also a Congressional reorganization attendant to that newly arranged executive branch -- that has not occurred here yet. The 9/11 Commission recommendation package devoted one of its 41 recommendations to recognizing that the Congress needs to deal in a far more effective and efficient oversight manner than it has so far.

"Congress produced, if you will, about half the chore. The executive branch reorganizational effort is under way. The attendant Congressional oversight reorganizational effort has not really even begun. There are eighty-seven committees or subcommittees that we in the Department

have to deal with as part of that oversight process. We have to find a way to do better than that, and the only responsible parties there are those who run the Congressional branch.”

Fletcher School Conference, Keeping America Safe: Progress and Partnerships in the 21st Century, October 29, 2004.

Former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger:

“At last count, there were 26 full committees with jurisdiction—and a total of 88 committees including subcommittees. As problems are uncovered or take time to be resolved, the opportunities for criticism will mount. Nonetheless, since the stake is the security of our homeland, the new department deserves support—and not unnecessary carping. To whatever extent the Congress can help by simplifying the overlapping committee structure that oversees the department, that would be a significant contribution.”

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, September 9, 2003.

9/11 Families for a Secure America:

“One such cause that deserves the attention of all Americans is the ultimate fate of the House Homeland Security Committee. This Committee is due to expire in January just as members of the Congress return to the nation’s capital to begin its work in the new session.

“The 9/11 Families for a Secure America believe that allowing the expiration of a committee of such importance would be a grave mistake – one that could lead to severe consequences.

“While we endorse a permanent Homeland Security Committee, we also feel it is essential that it has the legislative and oversight jurisdiction it needs to carry forth a strong homeland security agenda in the years ahead. Without this jurisdiction, the Department of Homeland Security will lack the direction it needs to succeed in its mission to protect and defend America from terrorism.”

9/11 Families for a Secure America Press Release, November 19, 2004.

American Enterprise Institute:

The reason for creating a permanent standing committee with primary jurisdiction is clear. Currently, according to the Administration, 13 full committees in each house, along with more than 60 subcommittees, a total of 88 panels overall, share some jurisdiction or responsibility for homeland security... To leave this fragmentation means that the central motivation to create a new department will be seriously compromised... In our judgment, there is no way out of the logic that there should eventually be a permanent standing committee on homeland security.

Hearing, Norman J. Ornstein, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, May 19, 2003.

The Gilmore Commission:

“The Congress is still not well organized to address issues involving homeland security in a cohesive way. The House recently took the bold, necessary, but unfortunately only temporary step of creating a special committee just to consider the proposal to create the Department of Homeland Security. Structures of that nature are required on a longer-term basis. Jurisdiction for various aspects of this issue continues to be scattered over dozens of committees and subcommittees.”

“Recommendation: That each House of the Congress establish a separate authorizing committee and related appropriation subcommittee with jurisdiction over Federal programs and authority for Combating Terrorism/Homeland Security.”

Gilmore Commission, Fourth Report, at page 50 (Dec. 15, 2002).

9/11 Commission Vice Chair Lee Hamilton:

“[Y]ou are at a crunch point, and ... if another incident were to happen – and the Congress had done nothing to put its own house in order – I think the institution, and maybe some of you individually, would be criticized for not acting. In other words, I think there is a political risk here

“[Y]ou have to get your house in order so that you can have robust oversight over the Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Homeland Security needs your advice and counsel. Secretary Ridge said, ‘I want to be able to come to one expert body of the Congress and lay out my problems, tell them what we’ve done, tell them what we haven’t done and get their advice and counsel.’ Secretary Ridge prefers this rather than going to 88 subcommittees – 88 subcommittees! That really is absurd, and it is simply not fair to the Executive branch to make them do that.”

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, August 17, 2004.

Center for National Policy President Tim Roemer:

“I strongly support the 9-11 Commission report’s recommendation that Congress create a single, principal point of oversight to provide effective guidance to the Department. Only a permanent Homeland Security Committee would have the focus and expertise necessary to accomplish such a great task. This permanent committee should have the jurisdiction and legislative clout necessary to assist the Department in its critical mission to safeguard the security of the American people.”

Former Congressman and 9-11 Commission Member, Press Release,
November 19, 2004

International Association of Fire Chiefs:

“In the 109th Congress, the International Association of Fire Chiefs would like to see a permanent, standing Homeland Security Committee with full oversight, authorization, and legislative jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security.”

International Association of Fire Chiefs letter to Speaker Hastert,
December 10, 2004

Markle Foundation Task Force on National Security in the Information Age:

“Congress should simplify its oversight of homeland security. The ideal approach would be to form standing committees on homeland security. Difficult and disruptive as this would be for Congress, it is no more than is being asked of the Executive Branch and it is the only way to assure sensible, effective congressional oversight and responsibility. ... [I]t is the only way to assure sensible, effective congressional oversight and responsibility.”

Markle Report at 76 (Oct. 2002) (Report of Working Group on Organizational Challenges)

Center for the Study of the Presidency:

“Dr. David Abshire, President of the non-partisan Center for the Study of the Presidency, and Ambassador Max Kampelman, today called for...a permanent Committee on Homeland Security.”

News Release, November 5, 2004